

# Visioning a Statewide System to Support Folklore, Traditions and Traditional Arts in Washington

**December 20, 2013 Consultant Report**

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Cedar River Watershed Education Center, North Bend WA

Thursday, November 21, 2013, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm



Master Artist Virginia Beavert with Apprentice Roger Jacob  
Apprenticeship in Yakama and Klickitat legends and songs

*Photo: Fritz Dent*

## With appreciation:

- Funding support from American Folklore Society, 4Culture, and Northwest Heritage Resources
- In-kind support from Northwest Heritage Resources and Jack Straw Productions
- Planning and guidance from Steering Committee: Laurel Sercombe/Ethnomusicology Archive at U of W School of Music; Debbie Fant/independent folklorist; Jill Linzee/Northwest Heritage Resources; Jens Lund/Wa State Parks and Rec Commission, retired; Alma Plancich/Ethnic Heritage Council; Joan Rabinowitz/Jack Straw Productions
- 24 retreat participants (listed in Appendix 2) and another 15 people who completed the pre-retreat survey

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## **Executive Summary**

On November 21, 2013, 24 representatives of local and state government, private non-profit cultural and Tribal organizations, folklorists, and traditional artists came together for a planning retreat to re-envision a statewide system to support folklore, traditions and traditional arts in Washington. Organized by a steering committee led by Northwest Heritage Resources and facilitated by community cultural development consultant Bill Flood, these cultural leaders reviewed past Washington programs and other state folklore programs and took the first steps toward re-envisioning a statewide program. Participants, agenda, and notes from the retreat are included as appendices.

There was strong support among retreat participants for re-envisioning a statewide folk and traditional arts program and for seeking State support/funding. Program leadership could be centered in a state agency such as ArtsWA (considering its program history and experience) or a constellation of non-profit organizations working in close partnership with ArtsWA. It is essential that stakeholder organizations and groups, including those represented at the planning retreat, are part of the organizational model. The retreat was conceived and designed as a beginning step in program planning; further analysis and organizing is needed to clarify program vision, organizational structure, and how to realize the vision. The organizational model should clearly build on the strengths of existing organizations.

## **Purpose and Process**

In June, 2013 ArtsWA dissolved its Folk and Traditional Arts Program. For 2013-14, ArtsWA identified Northwest Heritage Resources as its traditional arts non-profit partner, eligible to apply for National Endowment for the Arts State Partnership Folk Arts Infrastructure funds. A core group of organizations (primarily the steering committee for this retreat) quickly began discussing ways to build a more sustainable system for folklife and folk and traditional arts in Washington. Northwest Heritage Resources applied for and received funds from the American Folklore Society and 4Culture to support a convening of Washington folklife stakeholders. Northwest Heritage Resources contracted with community cultural development consultant Bill Flood to help plan and facilitate the retreat. Bill facilitated a similar process in 2010 leading to the formation of the Oregon Folklife Network based at the University of Oregon.

Goals for the Washington planning retreat were to identify the specific interests of stakeholders, what role each of them could play in a re-envisioned program, and how stakeholders viewed building sustainable support. The steering committee and

Bill worked from August through November to plan and organize the retreat. An online survey was conducted to inform the retreat; results are summarized in Appendix 4. Agenda for the retreat was shaped around the realities of: 1) limited time at the retreat (four working hours, ½ hour for lunch); 2) dedication to hearing from all participants; and, 3) need to accomplish as much as possible without pushing too hard and too fast for answers. Digital audio recordings were made of retreat discussions and should be referenced for future program planning.

### **What We Learned**

The following key concepts describing a statewide system for Washington were mentioned repeatedly in retreat dialogue. Please see retreat notes attached for more detail (Appendix 3). While these concepts may seem overly simple and obvious, they form the basis for the “values” of a new organization or program.

**People** – The people of Washington and their traditions, customs, and values are the foundation and riches for this program. Statewide folk and traditional arts programs are uniquely positioned to represent all people, groups, and interests of the state. All citizens have a cultural heritage and share common folklore and traditions with other members of their cultural communities, large and small.

**Communities** – Our cultural communities and communities of place are formed around shared beliefs and traditions – the riches we seek to celebrate, document, preserve and clarify. Acknowledging the specificity and diversity of our Washington communities is central to this program, as is linking with the critical issues facing communities and groups. Washington is undergoing massive social and economic change; enormous opportunity exists to use folk and traditional arts to serve and connect grassroots communities.

**Sharing** – Folk and traditional arts are key vehicles through which culture is passed from one generation to another. In a similar way they stimulate engaging and effective mechanisms to bring separate cultures closer together. Retreat participants stressed the centrality of storytelling to folk and traditional arts and the increasing recognition of the value of storytelling in community development.

**Representation** – The program must be built on statewide representation from communities of interest and communities of place, organizational stakeholders, ethnic, occupational, and other groups. A King-County-centric organization is not what stakeholders envision.

**Resources** – Planning must position the program for sustainable support. A strong sponsoring organization and champion(s) are needed to identify, marshal and manage resources.

### **Other Key Points**

- There was strong support for re-envisioning a program. With the approximate cost of the prior ArtsWA Folk and Traditional Arts Program being \$100,000 (not counting agency overhead), the program has great impact and value...in fact, increasing value as the ethnic populations in Washington continue to grow. There was also discussion at the retreat of \$150,000 probably being a more realistic figure to begin a new program.
- There is deep recognition (at least among those attending the retreat) of the value of Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Programs. While these programs may not have the mass appeal of other programs, such as events, one-on-one cultural mentoring is essential to preserving and passing on cultural traditions.
- No one best model for a statewide program exists. Success will depend on linking strategically with resources and interests of the state, participation of key stakeholders, and the specific program vision. Statewide folk and traditional arts program typically operate within: 1) statewide public agencies (arts, heritage, humanities, parks); 2) universities with academic folklife programs; or 3) private non-profit organizations with a statewide mission.
- There is no clear sponsoring agency and champion for the program. The immediate choice for sponsorship is ArtsWA, yet it is not clear whether or not a folk and traditional arts program will fit within that agency's vision, and whether board and staff will champion. Retreat participants were clear that statewide focus and commitment from the State is needed; whether or not the program should be housed at ArtsWA is not clear.

### **Next Steps**

**Communication** – Copies of this report and follow-up communication will be mailed to all retreat participants and other stakeholders contacted via the planning process. The communication should clarify next steps, how people can be involved, and provide key organizers/points of contact.

## Strategy

- 1) Assemble a core group of stakeholders to plan and organize. Clarify a process for moving forward with anticipated timeline.
- 2) Seek resources to support planning.
- 3) Carefully analyze options for the best home and organizational model for the program. List pro's and con's around each home/model. Clarify program vision. Decide on model and develop a clear diagram of model and vision (the potential).
- 4) Draft a three-year program budget so that organizers have a sense of the scale and elements of the program and can begin identifying resources.
- 5) Draft a brief fact sheet that outlines the program's vision and key benefits.
- 6) Craft strategy and prepare for 2015 Legislative session:
  - Prepare for February 5, 2014 Arts and Heritage Day at Capitol
  - Prepare for any Legislative requests by August, 2014 via WA State Arts Alliance

Following are the people who volunteered to serve on the project core group, or as resources to this group.

- Fant, Debbie – independent folklorist
- Graden, Lizette – Nordic Heritage Museum
- Halberstadt, Shannon – Spokane Arts Fund
- Karlson, Ryan – WA State Parks and Recreation Department
- Linzee, Jill – Northwest Heritage Resources
- Rabinowitz, Joan – Jack Straw Productions
- Taylor, Eric – 4Culture
- Vrandenburgh, Elaine – Dispute Resolution Center/folklorist – Olympia
- Ziegler, Julie – Humanities WA

Resource:

- Rae, Ramona – NW Native American Basketweavers Association
- Hsieh, Kathy – Seattle Office of Cultural Affairs

## Consultant's Reflections

- The 2010 statewide folklife planning project (similar goal: re-visioning program and identifying organizational home) that I facilitated in Oregon was sponsored by the Oregon Arts Commission with dedicated funding. Significant resources allowed for: 1) stakeholders from around the state to come together three times over the course of six months in facilitated planning sessions; 2) research to be completed prior to and between meetings to inform our work; 3) development of a comprehensive report; and

4) a clear and (now successful) strategy/model (the Oregon Folklife Network) that could be developed and adopted by stakeholders.

During our retreat in Washington, we probably tried to accomplish too much with too little time. More time was needed for participants to build trust, reflect, discuss, and consider the pro's and con's of all scenarios. Yet they worked hard and paved the way for program development. The fact that 24 organizational and community leaders from across Washington devoted a day (or more for some) to the retreat says much for their commitment to supporting folklore, traditions, and traditional arts.

- Washington has a rich set of resources to draw from...including the multiplicity of people and cultures as well as a much more advanced system of private giving than we have in Oregon. Huge opportunity exists to build a program based on current issues, needs, and resources.
- Program organizers should not assume that people outside the stakeholders represented at the retreat clearly understand the value and necessity of folk and traditional arts. The case for why folk and traditional arts are essential to healthy cultures and communities should be made consistently, clearly, and succinctly.
- Strong leadership and collaboration will most likely make or break the program's success. Washington has many resources at hand, including mature private non-profit organizations (see retreat participants) which, when working together, can make a successful coalition for program development.

## **Appendix 1: RETREAT AGENDA**

### **Washington Folklore, Traditions, and Traditional Arts Planning Meeting**

Cedar River Watershed Education Center, North Bend WA

Thursday, November 21, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm

*Our task today is to imagine a sustainable support system for folklife and traditional arts in Washington.*

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 10:30 | Review context, purpose, groundrules for today               |
| 10:45 | Rolling introductions  |
| 10:55 | Definitions of folklore, traditions, traditional arts        |
| 11:05 | Washington program history. What can we learn from this?     |
| 11:25 | Vision for a statewide program. What will be most useful?    |
| 12:15 | Lunch break  |
| 12:45 | Other statewide models. What can we learn/borrow from these? |
| 1:30  | Envisioning sustainable funding for a Washington program     |
| 2:15  | Next steps. How can you help?                                |
| 2:50  | Wrap-up  |
| 3:00  | Adjourn. Thank you and drive safely!                         |

You will be emailed a copy of the report from this meeting. To stay in touch about next steps, etc, please email Jill at [info@northwestheritageresources.org](mailto:info@northwestheritageresources.org).

***Many thanks to the project steering committee, American Folklore Society, 4Culture, Humanities WA, Washington State Arts Commission, Northwest Heritage Resources, Jack Straw Productions, Ethnic Heritage Council, Ethnomusicology Archive at U of W School of Music, and YOU for support of this important meeting!***



## **Appendix 2: RETREAT PARTICIPANTS**

### **Washington Folklore, Traditions, and Traditional Arts Planning Meeting**

Bill, Inez – Hibulb Cultural Center  
Fant, Debbie – independent folklorist  
Graden, Lizette – Nordic Heritage Museum  
Halberstadt, Shannon – Spokane Arts Fund  
Hsieh, Kathy – Seattle Office of Cultural Affairs  
Karlson, Ryan – WA State Parks and Recreation Department  
Kaviani, Khodadad – Central WA U., Dept of Ed  
Kelly Jim – 4Culture  
Linzee, Jill – Northwest Heritage Resources  
Lund, Jens – retired/independent folklorist  
McCracken, Peter – Centrum  
Mills, Margaret – retired professor  
Parker, Theresa – Makah Cultural and Research Center  
Plancich, Alma – Ethnic Heritage Council  
Rabinowitz, Joan – Jack Straw Productions  
Rae, Ramona – NW Native American Basketweavers Association  
Sercombe, Laurel – U.S. Ethnomusicology Archive  
Sidman, Sarah – ArtsFund  
Townsend, Rob – Northwest Folklife  
Tsutakawa, Mayumi – ArtsWA (WSAC)  
Tucker, Kris – ArtsWA (WSAC)  
Vrandenburgh, Elaine – Dispute Resolution Center/folklorist  
Wright, Susie – Hibulb Cultural Center  
Ziegler, Julie – Humanities WA

Colleagues who had planned to attend, but were unable to make it at the last minute:

Kilmer, Jennifer - WA State History Museum  
Kuckkahn, Tina - Evergreen Longhouse & Cultural Center  
Leach, Patricia - Whatcom Museum  
Millard, Betsy - Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum  
Pritchard, Faaluaina (Lua) – Asian Pacific Cultural Center

## **Appendix 3: RETREAT NOTES**

### **Washington Folklore, Traditions, and Traditional Arts Planning Meeting**

Today is about re-envisioning folk arts support in Washington.

#### **Reflections on program history**

Jens Lund and Jill Linzee gave brief overviews of the two prior Washington statewide programs: Washington State Folklife Council (private non-profit organization) - 1984-1992, and Washington State Arts Commission Folk and Traditional Arts Program - 1991-2013.

Participant comments:

- Power of apprenticeships!
- Diversity
- Shift...role of traditional arts/practice/cultural
- Fieldwork...a lot of it!
- Early program:
  - politics
  - not sustainable
  - no grounding
- Documentation is important
- Leverage resources is important
- Highlighting/focus on Native American cultures
- Partnerships/collaborations abundant
- Importance of continuity: bringing people together: basket makers gatherings...under one roof
- Now resources falling out...difficult to move forward
- Many of the program topics are still relevant

#### **Visioning statewide system**

- Financial stability and community-based important
- Collaboration/constellation very important
- Contemporary yet rooted in history
- Apprenticeships
  - for culture bearers
  - for organizers
- Role of technology NOW
- Disconnected and getting connected
- Making and doing
- Communicating
- Multigenerational
- Personal – alot about person to person
- The “who”/stakeholders...important
- Resource sharing among communities and agencies

- Serving underserved

***Additional notes from participant 3 x 5 cards on re-visioning program***

- Who? State/local geographic/community identity
- Resources include: grants, access and connections to experts and facilities/services, people, convening and getting people together
- Folk arts are personal, collaborative, resourceful, connected
- Collective fundraising
- Gathering, resources, training, funding which supports community vision, relationships, oral history
- Funding, partnerships, collaborate, personal, resources, technology
- Funding, training/resources to capture and preserve cultural traditions (e.g. doing oral histories; partners to help train and/or do this work)
- Consortium/resources to bring people together, find people
- Personal, collaborative, resourceful-resource sharing, preserve, document, disseminate
- Share, resource sharing
- Partnerships, collaborating, personal, convening
- Person to person sharing, facilitating heritage making, falling apart, disconnection, connected, connectivity, contemporary, communicating, making, doing, community-based
- connected, contemporary, diverse (geographic, age, culture)
- communication, community, continuity, contemporary, apprenticeship, sharing
- Multi-generational, inclusive, engaging (including digital component...which would allow new people to discover), evolving, cross-cultural, gatherings – in person – face to face)
- Contemporary, rooted in community apprenticeship both for the culture bearers and for heritage organizations. Nurture young leaders. Role of technology. What does it look like to present, document, disseminate cultural history (point of discovery). Foster generational connection (multi-generational). Places, person to person, hands-on transmission.
- Same leaders for 30 years
- Less long-term fieldwork
- Keep close ties to community development
- Sudden disconnect in heritage
- Increasing role of technology
- Consult libraries like U.W. or Seattle Public Library (e.g. place to house documents or use technology)
- Sustainable – endowment – “The Right Mix” – funding
- Collaboration needs to be seamless (many different organizations, a variety of organizations and decision-making processes, how do we collaborate most effectively with limited resources)
- How do we recognize the diversity of the resources and outputs?
- Sustainability of funds/contributions at foundation level. Financial stability.
- Community – Ethnic Heritage Foundation
- Connecting individual/isolated communities into a larger sharing/informing larger society
- Recognition/acknowledgement
- Donor base who care about program

- Sustainable funding
- Community piece
- Earned income
- Collaborative (seamless)
- Connecting independent communities
- Sustainable (financial)
- Sustainable (community-based)
- Collaborative
- Connected
- Cross-cultural
- Sustainable (financial stability, community-based support)
- Collaborative
- Connecting – networking
- Acknowledging/recognizing

### **Gaps**

- Size of state
- Diversity
- Political/advocacy/statewide
- Decline in public support for arts and culture
- Home for this
- Lack of appreciation within private sector (with exceptions)
- So much going on

### **Challenges**

- Working with marginalized groups
- Cross-cultural connections
- Fund development, working through political systems

### **What can we learn from others?**

Our system should be:

- Broadly representative
- Diverse but collaborative
- Agile, opportunistic, serving those marginalized, projects and possibilities
- Future-oriented/traditionally based
- Technologically savvy
- Serve the underserved and marginalized and less than visible throughout the state
- United representation
- Cross-cultural sharing
- Broad representation
- Power of convening
- Different interests collaborating together for something wonderful will pop out

- Uniting representation
- Convening
- Cross-cultural sharing
- Broad representation
- Serving the underserved, united representation, broad
- United representation...partnerships of a variety of people over time
  - cross-cultural sharing
  - breadth of representation
- Challenge to serve a large, complex state
- Power of convening (even without formal apprenticeships) e.g. Basketmakers Gathering
- Texas – linking with social service/new immigrant programs
- Our model must address key issues...such as migration
- Articulate the problem we are looking to solve
- Clarify who we want to be
- Resourcefulness...what we have to build on
  - See where there is capacity/strength
  - Then identify what problems we are to solve
- Last state program was approximately a \$100,000 program...but leveraged much more in partnerships, grants, other resources than this. Articulate the true costs of a new program.

### **Models**

What is our model? What are our resources? Statewide folk and traditional arts program typically operate within 1) statewide public agencies (arts, heritage, humanities, parks), 2) universities with academic folklife programs, or 3) private non-profit organizations with a statewide mission.

### **Participant comments:**

- Restore the state program...pro: has a statewide mission
  - Board support?
  - Potential funding request to legislature
  - Have Heritage Cultural Caucus
- Utilize NW Heritage Resources as nonprofit partner, in cooperation with other non-profits
- But we are missing central focal point

### **Pillars of programming**

- Convening
- Documentation/preservation
- Presentation -- venues
- Education -- apprenticeships, k-12 etc.
- Outreach – community work – continually bringing in new people, new organizations, new communities
- Stories as root of culture

### **What has to happen?**

- We must have a central advocate
- Listening carefully to communities...authentic engagement
- Develop case for relevance
- Need spaces/stages (parks) for presentation

### **What is important?**

- Our own voice coming through...not only the voices of funders
- Stories as root/foundation
  - What is the message?
    - Empowering vision of community development
- How to capture stories
- Working for marginalized
- Embracing storytelling/listening/community development in a different view
- Folklore is not just for disadvantaged
- Theme is relevance (storytelling)

### **Bright spots/strengths**

- Resources via formal and informal groups
- Diversity of state...both assets and challenges
- Private foundations. But who are they?
- Massive demographic change
- Organizations with passionate individuals
- Transition of leadership
- Narrative is key

### **What is key to building support and funding?**

- Relationships
- Trust
- Participation
- Research
- Leadership
- Big picture thinkers and leaders
- Build the case
- Need immediate wins, successes
- Cross-sector alliances
- Sense of urgency
- Realize tension of URGENCY contrasted with WILLINGNESS TO GO DEEP
- Important commitments
- Build endowment
- Build budgets...show leverage opportunities

### **Next steps**

- Advocacy campaign to reinstate program
  - Need passionate leader(s)
  - Letters from everyone in this room to others!!!
  - Organize meetings with Legislature and Governor
- Prepare for 2015 Legislative Session
  - Get ducks in a row by 8/2014 via WA State Arts Alliance
- Need a good visual diagram of the system we are envisioning:
  - Maybe leaders of ethnic organizations in the middle
  - Other cultural organizations in next tier out from middle
  - Public in next tier out from middle...sign on for support letters

### **Also to consider with vision and next steps**

- We lack development of core mission or purpose statement
  - Tweak the vision (maybe this is actually a network housed at ArtsWA)
- Geographic diversity is key
- ArtsWA Board must embrace this
- Feb 5, 2014 – Arts and Heritage Day at Capitol
  - arts associations
  - museum associations, all volunteer
- 2014: raise the issue
- Need something to show to legislature...to request support
- Regarding existing project benefits:
  - statewide reach of programs into communities, making connections
  - building new audiences, serving underserved communities
  - preservation included in vision
- Scale of gatherings in smaller communities
  - differences in resources of members (\$) for access
  - location and economics re: access...not to fall into cracks
- Advocacy...power in serving especially marginalized communities without excluding non-marginalized communities

## **Appendix 4: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS from PRE-RETREAT SURVEY Washington Folklore, Traditions, and Traditional Arts Planning Meeting**

**Have you and/or your organization been involved with any folklore or folk and traditional arts programs or organizations in Washington State in the past?** 40 respondents:

- 54% - yes, with Northwest Heritage Resources
- 38% - yes, with ArtsWA Folk and Traditional Arts
- 38% - yes with NW Folklife Festival Cultural Focus
- 38% - yes, other organization
- 23% - with Wa Parks Folk Arts in Parks
- 21% - yes, with the Wa State Folklife Council
- 10% - no

**How have you been involved?** 34 respondents:

- 53% - as a partner with one or more organizations
- 50% - as the presenter/curator/organizer of a program
- 44% - as the host of a traditional arts program that another organization organized/curated/produced
- 35% - as a recipient of funds
- 32% - as a funder
- 32% - as a sponsoring organization
- 21% - as part of a joint marketing effort
- 15% - selling Wa state folk/traditional arts publications
- 12% - as an individual traditional artist
- 15% - no response

**What would be useful functions or services?**

- 87% - support for specific cultural communities or tradition bearers and artists
- 87% - support for organizations documenting or presenting folklore, cultural traditions, folk arts
- 85% - maintain a database of easily accessible information
- 74% - statewide field research and documentation of folklore, traditions, folk and traditional arts
- 69% - curate, produce, present public programs featuring folklore, traditions and communities, folk and traditional art forms
- 59% - run statewide folk and traditional arts apprenticeship program (linking master tradition bearers with apprentices)
- 56% - lobby on behalf of folk and traditional arts organizations and individual artists
- 54% - produce publications and recordings featuring folklore, traditions and communities, folk and traditional art forms
- 3% - no response

*NOTE: Folk arts in education is an important function that is not on this list.*